

## **IT'S NEVER AS BAD AS IT SEEMS**

### **Hebrews 12:1-15 (key verses 12-15)**

**Introduction:** Something happened to cause some of the early Christians to lose their original vibrant faith for once they were untiring, alert, and would do anything for the Lord. They had persecuted Christians in their homes, they endured personal loss, trials, heartaches and persecution, they lost their possessions, yet they never complained then. However something happened and the Christians mentioned in Hebrews are different. They act as if they are paralyzed and grumble. Hebrews 11 has been called "The Roll Call of the Faithful" as the Christians mentioned there had been fed to lions, cut into pieces, stoned, jailed, wandered about in deserts, and suffered bitterly. They could have avoided all the suffering for all they had to do was to withdraw from the Christian faith but they chose suffering rather than to deny Jesus. So what was wrong with these Christians in our text? What is wrong with so many Christians today who think that they have it so hard?

### **I. BELIEVERS HAD A TENDENCY TO OVERESTIMATE THEIR PROBLEMS**

1. The Christians of our text had not suffered anything like those mentioned in chapter 11 ("The Roll Call of the Faithful") nor had they even begun to suffer like Jesus did.
2. Their biggest problem was not from WITHOUT but from WITHIN.
  - They had been neglecting their spiritual life.
  - Neglected prayer life causes spiritual energy to decline.
  - They had developed "feeble knees" and they were no longer runners in the race that all Christians must run for the Lord Jesus.
3. The author (Paul) got on to them - admonished - scolded. **(12:14)**
  - They needed to repent of backsliding.
  - They needed to repent of prayerlessness.
  - They needed to get back into the race of living for the Lord Jesus.
  - They needed to pursue peace, holiness and sanctification which are necessary in order to be obedient to the Lord.

### **II. TODAY'S BELIEVERS ARE HAVING THE SAME PROBLEMS**

1. Christians, today, are no different than those of our text.
  - Feeble knees - defeated attitude - about to collapse as a witness for the Lord Jesus.
2. Christians! What exactly do we really have to worry about?
  - Have we stopped running the Christian race, trying to live like the Lord Jesus?
  - Have we forgotten about the countless multitudes before us who really suffered and here we are crying "poor little me, I suffer so much...."
  - Has spiritual paralysis ensnared us?
3. Christians! What about on the inside of us? What about our spiritual condition?
  - What about our excitement, zeal in trying to do the will of the Lord Jesus?
  - Do we systematically read/study God's Word and talk with Him daily?
  - Do we pray with other believers, sharing each other's concerns?
  - Do we faithfully attend worship services?
  - Are we doing our part financially - tithing at least?
  - Are we really running the race of being like the Lord Jesus/

- Are we fighting as good soldiers?
  - Does the peace of God rule in our hearts?
  - Do we love and help others without asking for anything in return?
  - Can the world see, by our love for each other, that we are genuine, REAL, Christians?
  - Is it our deepest desire to be used of God and to be a blessing to others?
  - Christian! How do YOU measure up?
4. Christians, could it be that our trouble lies in the fact that we have been neglecting the INNER person/man/being?

### III. THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO GET BACK TO BEING AS ONE SHOULD BE

1. Christians! We must look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, the author of eternal life.
2. The ONLY way to overcome spiritual stagnation and enjoy spiritual freshness IS TO LOOK to Jesus. Remember how Peter looked to Jesus, climbed out of the boat and walked on water?
  - When we see Jesus our spiritual fatigue will disappear and our spiritual paralysis will be healed.
  - When we see Jesus, we will receive freshness, new courage, new confidence, and will be able to run the race (being like Jesus) and fight the fight (against sin and Satan).
3. When we begin to overestimate our trials, tribulations, difficulties and such and worry about them spiritual fatigue and stagnation sets in.
  - However, when we see Jesus, the center of every Christian's existence, things begin to change.
  - ***Romans 8:31-32; Psalm 97:11; Ephesians 5:14***
4. Christians! We need to awaken! Good intentions can lead to spiritual bankruptcy.
  - We must not ONLY have GOOD intentions, but we must DEMONSTRATE them, seeking to do God's will in ever detail of our lives.

### CONCLUSION:

1. Christians, could it be that some of us need to get ALONE with the Lord?
  - Fall on our knees and in humble submission and sincere prayer, REDEDICATE, RECONSECRATE our lives to Him?
2. Did you notice that the command in the text was to LIFT UP, MAKE STRAIGHT, FOLLOW PEACE....
  - God expects us to make the first move - we must act first then God will step in and help.
3. The tired, worried, anxious believer needs to make a DEFINITE, personal commitment to the Lord.
  - He/she needs to start anew and afresh in serving the Lord faithfully.
  - He/she needs to take up the cross, deny him/herself, witness of and for the Lord and follow in His steps.
  - All of us need to show ourselves approved, followers that need not be ashamed.
  - All of us need to relearn about prayer by praying.
4. Believers who have grown weary and are living lives of worry and anxiety will, upon returning to the Lord Jesus, discover anew and afresh that joy that comes in walking with Jesus.
5. IF YOU HAVE REACHED A CRISIS POINT, it need not be disastrous.
  - Remember Christian, trials can be opportunities for great victories.
  - Jesus is the same today as He was yesterday and will be forever.
  - Your troubles can be conquered in the Lord Jesus and bring great victories.